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DCI
Counterterrorist
CenterCentral
Intelligence
Agency

COUNTERTERRORIST CENTER COMMENTARY

26 June 1996

Saudi Arabia: Bombing of US Military Barracks in Dhahran

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Summary

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The 25 June truck bomb attack at Khobar Towers, Dhahran, which resulted in 19 Americans dead and approximately 300 wounded, appears to have been well-planned and executed. Saudi oppositionists are prime suspects. A previously unknown group—Legion of the Martyr Abdallah al-Huthaifi, possibly linked to the London-based Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights—claimed responsibility. Reporting indicates that friends of the Saudis executed for the November 1995 bombing in Riyadh, as well as ex-Saudi financier Usama bin Ladin and other dissident groups, were contemplating attacks in the kingdom in recent months. We also cannot rule out a role by Iran, which has engaged in intelligence collection against US facilities at Dhahran, or Iraq, which has vowed revenge for its defeat in the Gulf War.

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] DCI Counterterrorist Center, with contributions from [redacted] Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, [redacted] CTC. It was coordinated within CIA. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Near East/South Asia [redacted]

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This attack was well-executed and may have been planned for several months. Personnel at the Khobar facility have reported numerous incidents, the latest on 24 June, of surveillance and harassment by young Arab males in the past eight months. These incidents appear to have been efforts to test the facility's defenses and the guards' reaction times. They include firing shots, crashing the perimeter fence, and taking photos as well as other forms of surveillance. The hostile actions occurred between 2000 and 2400 local time.

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